



Legal  
Services  
Society

British Columbia  
[www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca)

# News Release

April 11, 2006

## Telephone advice for accused in custody begins

*Vancouver, BC* — People who are in custody at police lock-ups awaiting bail hearings can now get legal advice over the telephone during the evenings and on weekends and holidays.

The Legal Services Society (LSS) is providing the service through a two year pilot project that began April 1. The society is funding this project in response to a suggestion from the Chief Judge of the BC Provincial Court.

"Providing this advice will mean people who qualify for release will no longer have to be kept in custody overnight or on weekends and holidays," said Executive Director Mark Benton.

"The service should also help make court processes more efficient, since we know that when people are better informed early in the legal process, they are better able to address their problems effectively and avoid escalation of the issues later on.

"We also expect the service will reduce court lists – particularly on Mondays, which now include the backlog of weekend bail issues that could have been disposed of by consent," he added.

Under the project, criminal lawyers will provide legal advice outside normal business hours to accused people held in custody in police lock-ups across BC. The lawyers will:

- facilitate consent releases and ensure the accused understand the conditions they are agreeing to, or
- negotiate with police prosecutors to ensure bail terms are reasonable when the client is remanded in custody (and, where appropriate, advise the accused to wait for a courtroom bail hearing with duty counsel)

Telephone advice is available Monday – Friday evenings from 6 p.m. – 10 p.m. and on weekends and statutory holidays from 8 a.m. – 10 p.m. Lawyers do not conduct teleconference bail hearings. The project evaluation, however, will include determining whether that level of service would be effective.

Interpreter services are available for clients who do not speak English.

The project, to cost about \$280,000/year, falls within the society's strategic priority of testing innovative ways to fill gaps in service. It is expected to serve 5,500 – 6,500 clients annually, and complements the society's other legal advice programs.

For further information, check our [Legal Advice fact sheet](#), and/or contact:

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(604) 601-6004

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*LSS is an independent, non-profit organization that has provided legal aid to people with low incomes in BC since 1979.*

*Legal representation is available for serious family issues (e.g., involving child apprehension matters or domestic violence) and serious criminal problems. It is also available for some immigration, mental health law, and prison law matters.*

*Legal advice is available at most courts through duty counsel and by telephone through LawLINE and the Brydges Line (both are province-wide toll-free lines).*

*Legal information is available through LawLINE, plain language publications, and Internet services, including the Electronic Law Library, the Family Law in British Columbia, the LSS, and the LawLINK websites. (See [www.lss.bc.ca](http://www.lss.bc.ca) for most of our publications, our catalogue, and website links.)*

*To contact the **LSS Call Centre and LawLINE**, dial: (604) 408-2172 (Lower Mainland) or 1-866-577-2525 (toll free from outside the Lower Mainland).*

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